

BCDOT-MTA Working Group Actions

Transit-Related Comments Collected in SE Study for the MTA

Introduction

This document presents several key issues, raised by stakeholders of the US DOT Volpe Center's Southeast Baltimore Transportation Impact Study, that can be considered by the MTA. Section A, "Issues," represents Volpe's organization of many comments into key points. We present some potential solutions that arose from our preliminary analysis of those points. Section B, "Reference of Key Stakeholder Comments, by Neighborhood," is a brief reference of specific comments sorted by the area from which they were received.

In an area with rapid development (and, thus, rapidly changing travel patterns), regular service planning is important so that transit service can be best matched to the evolving demands for transportation.

The Volpe Center recommends that the BCDOT form a Working Group with the MTA to address ongoing issues related to transit needs in the City. This could accompany the formation of Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) to work to increase transit options and transit mode share for key commercial and business districts in the southeast (TMAs are discussed more fully in the Policy Tools document that the Volpe Center is preparing as part of its study).

A. Issues

- Access to Key Intermodal Connections
 - **Stakeholders comment that it is hard to reach Penn Station or Camden Station** (for travel to Washington, DC and other connections) by transit from SE locations. Although some routes go within a few blocks, none provide a seamless connection to encourage commuters to use transit. In particular, this comment was heard from stakeholders in Fells Point, Washington Hill, and Butchers' Hill.
 - **More generally, there were requests for improved transit coordination**, including shuttles to feed rail and greater connections between modes.
 - There was a request for a **weekend MARC connection to DC**. (Although Amtrak offers frequent weekend service, it is more than twice as expensive as MARC, and the trains sometimes require advance reservations.)
- Shuttles or Shuttle-Like Service
 - "Shuttle" typically connotes short headways, short route length, and sometimes lower fares and special vehicles. Residents of the Southeast, especially of Fells Point and the area west of Patterson Park, are very interested in shuttles. While a full shuttle system in the typical sense of the word is likely not practical, these stakeholder suggestions do highlight some changes that may be possible and advantageous:

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- **Investigate the feasibility of breaking some long, complex MTA routes into two (or more) shorter routes, in order to provide better service to targeted destinations.** This can also help improve on-time performance and attract new riders with simplified options. For example, the #13 bus currently alternates throughout the day between a Walbrook-Fells Point route and a Walbrook-Canton route. Separation of these two spurs into separate routes would allow each to be modified to better serve desired destinations that have been identified so far through southeast-area stakeholder comments, and would make it easier for new riders to comprehend how to use the route.
- **Consider instituting some new, fairly short and simple routes in high-traffic areas.**
 - One route suggested by stakeholders was back and forth along Boston. An extension of this would be a full east-west connector from the CBD across the southeast below Eastern, which stakeholders also requested.¹ It would be important to make sure that this route offers direct connections to light rail, the Metro Subway, and if possible the Camden MARC station, as many stakeholders have cited the importance of improved intermodal integration.. Another option for waterfront-to-CBD access would be enhanced water-shuttle service stopping at several points across the waterfront between the CBD and the new Canton Crossing development at the corner of Clinton and Boston. This option would present more of a challenge for intermodal coordination, but would not be susceptible to roadway delays and may be more attractive for some riders.
 - Fells Point residents have requested a shuttle to Hopkins, running along Broadway. Extension of such a route to Penn Station would help people reach another destination that is currently difficult to reach. A route along Broadway (as opposed to Wolfe and Washington) offers the additional advantage of a direct connection to the Metro Subway at Johns Hopkins.
- **Consider limited rebranding---of vehicles, maps/schedules, and/or stop markers or bus shelters—to attract new riders.** An example might be the Crosstown Transit bus routes in the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority system in Boston. These routes, introduced in 1994, connect different bus routes and modes across the city rather than running along traditional transit corridors. They are distinguished by large, stylized letter “C”s on the sides of all buses, on all stop markers, and on related maps/schedules, and have their own route numbering system (CT1, CT2, CT3).

¹It should also be noted, however, that at least one Fells Point resident requested reducing bus service on the narrow Fells Point streets, stating that “the buses shake our foundations and cause noise pollution.”

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- Too many bus stops
 - **Many stakeholders feel that there are too many bus stops, too close together in certain parts of the study area. There are several concerns related to this:**
 - Several stakeholders (especially in the Canton, Brewer's Hill, and Highlandtown areas) observed that, on any given bus trip, some stops are unused. Though this is to be expected, residents become frustrated when they see many stops close together, some of which are (or seem to be) seldom used, but remain no-parking zones at all times. A number of stakeholders have identified consolidation of bus stops as a way to create additional street parking for residents, and have called for a study to identify stops as candidates for consolidation or removal. Any such study would need to balance the potential number of parking spots that could be created against possible inconvenience to transit riders, especially those with mobility limitations. However, removal of stops that are very close together, where feasible, could reduce bus running times somewhat and improve the service provided to riders as well.
 - A few stakeholders suggested that parking be permitted in bus stop zones in late evenings and other times when particular routes do not operate. While the need for evening parking in particular is great in many neighborhoods, this solution would likely create an enforcement nightmare because many bus routes start up again very early in the morning, before many residents are likely to be moving their cars. Therefore, this is not being considered for implementation.
- Extension of bus hours in bar/restaurant districts
 - **Late evening buses in bar/restaurant districts** (especially on Friday and Saturday nights) could alleviate parking crunches in the Fells Point area, reduce spillover of parking into other residential areas, and, as one stakeholder suggested, reduce drunk driving. For example, on Saturday the northbound #13 bus from Fells Point currently runs only during morning hours, with no service after 10 am. Similarly, O'Donnell Square, which is widely recognized as one of the most difficult places in the City to park, could benefit from increased late-night service on the #7, at least on Friday and Saturday nights (current headways are 40-50 minutes).
 - **It might be worth investigating the feasibility of instituting supplementary service for Friday and Saturday nights only in Fells Point and O'Donnell Square.** This might be an appropriate case for considering a shuttle, perhaps with a slightly smaller, more maneuverable vehicle to permit easier access to narrow streets with lots of pedestrian traffic and drivers trying to find parking spaces. Special branding would assist in marketing and help clarify for the public that this is a separate service with limited days and hours. Intermodal connections—to light rail and the Metro Subway--would be key for making such a shuttle a success.
- Operational Issues

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- Some stakeholders were concerned with safety and security on-board buses.
- Some redesign of maps of individual bus routes would make them easier to follow. In particular, it would be advantageous to show surrounding streets and landmarks. This would allow the public to locate their origin or destination in relation to the bus route. In addition, connecting and nearby bus and rail routes could be shown to emphasize intermodal possibilities.

B. Reference of Key Stakeholder Comments, by Neighborhood

● **Fells Point**

- Currently, there is no direct transit service from south of Aliceanna St., except for water taxi service. Destinations that stakeholders mentioned as priorities include the CBD, Hopkins, Penn Station, and Canton. However, one stakeholder mentioned that running buses on the narrow Fells Points streets (especially the cobblestone ones) creates a lot of noise and vibration.
- One stakeholder suggested extending bus line #21 further southeast to Boston St and Canton (e.g. to Safeway) and altering the route so the bus services Penn Station directly.
- Stakeholders suggest improved late-night transit to service bars and restaurants.

● **Washington Hill/Butcher's Hill**

- Stakeholder comments include suggesting improvements of transit connections to major commercial areas such as Fells Point and Canton, cultural centers such as Mt. Vernon and BMA, educational centers such as Charles Village/Homewood, and intermodal connection points such as Penn Station.

● **Greektown**

- One stakeholder suggested removal of bus stops from in front of liquor stores and other areas where riders may not feel safe waiting.
- In addition, one Greektown resident complained that MTA employees park on the streets there rather than in their designated lot, contributing to a parking shortage for residents.

● **Waterfront Area**

- Requests for improved east-west transit connections south of Eastern Ave. were a common theme among stakeholders in several waterfront neighborhoods between Inner Harbor and Canton.
- One stakeholder complained that the #10 bus route is overcrowded, at least during rush hour.
- There were a few suggestions for enhanced water shuttle service within the study area, as well as one suggestion to add a water shuttle connection from the CBD to Tidepoint.

● **Canton, Brewer's Hill, and Highlandtown**

- Stakeholders comment that there are many close-together bus stops, some of which seem to receive little use, and suggest that underused stops be evaluated for removal in order to increase street parking supply.